

Claims

1. An automatic identification system for accounting for and identifying a plurality of surgical sponges used during a surgical procedure, comprising:

machine-readable information located on a plurality of surgical sponges, each sponge of said plurality of surgical sponges having unique machine-readable information located thereon, and wherein said unique machine-readable information is unique for at least one surgical procedure.

2. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said unique machine-readable information is located on a substrate, said substrate positioned on a respective surgical sponge.

3. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein each said surgical sponge further includes an x-ray detectable element.

4. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said machine-readable information is contained within said surgical sponge.

5. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said machine-readable information is contained on said surgical sponge.

6. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein each of said plurality of surgical sponges further comprises unique human-readable information thereon associated with its respective unique machine-readable information.

7. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said information is made to be body fluid repellant to prevent obscuration thereof during reading.

1 8. The automatic identification system of Claim 7, wherein said substrate comprises a thin
2 film.

1 9. The automatic identification system of Claim 2, wherein said substrate is formed of inert
2 material.

1 10. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said machine-readable information
2 comprises bar code information.

1 11. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said machine-readable information
2 comprises compressed symbology.

1 12. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said unique machine readable
2 information is located on a substrate, said substrate positioned on a respective sponge, said
3 substrate comprising an adhesive for attaching said substrate to the surgical sponge.

1 13. The automatic identification system of Claim 12, wherein said adhesive comprises an x-
2 ray detectable element.

1 14. The automatic identification system of Claim 13, wherein said x-ray detectable element
2 comprises barium sulfate.

1 15. The automatic identification system of Claim 12, wherein said adhesive is of a type which
2 provides attachment by the application of heat thereto.

1 16. The automatic identification system of Claim 1, wherein said machine readable information
2 is located on a substrate, said substrate being positioned on a respective sponge, said substrate
3 comprising biologically inert material.

1 17. A surgical sponge system for accounting for and identifying a plurality of surgical sponges
2 used during a surgical procedure, comprising:

3 a plurality of surgical sponges, each sponge having unique machine readable information
4 located thereon, wherein said unique machine readable information is unique for at least one
5 surgical procedure.

1 18. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein said unique machine-readable
2 information is located on a substrate, said substrate positioned on a respective surgical sponge.

1 19. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein each said surgical sponge further
2 includes an x-ray detectable element.

1 20. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein said machine-readable
2 information is contained within said surgical sponge.

1 21. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein said machine-readable
2 information is contained on said surgical sponge.

1 22. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein each of said plurality of surgical
2 sponges further comprises unique human-readable information thereon associated with its
3 respective unique machine-readable information.

1 23. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein said information is made to be
2 body fluid repellant to prevent obscuration thereof during reading.

1 24. The automatic identification system of Claim 23, wherein said substrate comprises a thin
2 film.

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1 25. The automatic identification system of Claim 18, wherein said substrate is formed of inert
2 material.

1 26. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein said machine-readable
2 information comprises bar code information.

1 27. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein said machine-readable
2 information comprises compressed symbology.

1 28. The automatic identification system of Claim 17, wherein said unique machine readable
2 information is located on a substrate, said substrate positioned on a respective sponge, said
3 substrate comprising an adhesive for attaching said substrate to the surgical sponge.